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FM AMEMBASSY BRATISLAVA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9583  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRATISLAVA 000164

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NSC FOR DAMON WILSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/01/2021  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [PINR](#) [SOCI](#) [LO](#)  
SUBJECT: FICO: IF DZURINDA'S GOING TO WASHINGTON, THEN I  
DON'T WANT TO

REF: BRATISLAVA 131

Classified By: Ambassador Rodolphe M. Vallee for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)  
) .

11. (SBU) During a March 1 meeting with Smer Deputy International Secretary Katarina Nevedalova, we learned that Smer chairman Robert Fico -- who boasted to Ambassador last month (reftel) that he knew of Prime Minister Dzurinda's then-unannounced trip to the U.S. and was planning his own "get to know me" Washington tour for late March -- has decided he does not want to go to the U.S. after all. According to Nevedalova, Fico noted the similarity of the situation to the 2002 pre-election U.S. visits of both Dzurinda and HZDS Chairman Vladimir Meciar, and of the Slovak media reaction: photos of Dzurinda with POTUS, and Meciar with "lesser officials." Fico believes these optics hurt Meciar in the polls, and he doesn't want the same to happen to him.

IT'S NOT ABOUT THE U.S.  
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12. (SBU) Nevedalova insisted that Fico is aware of the mechanics of such trips, particularly that protocol dictates that heads of government meet with heads of government, and members of parliament -- like Fico -- meet with similar lawmakers executive branch officials of appropriate rank. She insisted that Fico's cold feet has nothing to do with his attitude to the United States, and that he still looks forward to visiting Washington to "introduce himself" to the policy community; however, in his political calculations, he is less and less inclined to travel on the heels of Dzurinda.

13. (C) COMMENT: We told Nevedalova that we look forward to a Fico visit to Washington at his earliest convenience, as we think that he and his party would benefit from a close relationship with the U.S. (particularly as we attempt to nurture the party into a more pro-Transatlantic posture). In the meantime, we will wait to see if Fico -- influenced by focus group results and possibly even by the coverage of Dzurinda's visit itself -- has a change of heart and decides to go to Washington anyway. END COMMENT.  
VALLEE